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A Study on the servicing of culturally different guests for the hotel industry in the U.S.

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**A STUDY ON THE SERVICING OF
CULTURALLY DIFFERENT GUESTS FOR
THE HOTEL INDUSTRY IN THE U.S.**

by
Ivan Shiou-Herng Chen

A project submitted to the
Faculty of the School of Food, Hotel and Tourism Management
at
Rochester Institute of Technology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
of
Master of Science

May, 1992

**ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
School of Food, Hotel and Travel Management
Department of Graduate Studies**

**M.S. Hospitality-Tourism Management
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M.S. Hospitality-Tourism Management
Presentation of Thesis/Project Findings

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The Hotel Industry In The U.S.

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ABSTRACT

Since the increasing number of foreign visitors in the U.S. incites the hotel industry to be more competitive, hotels need to expand services to meet the foreign guest's needs and wants in order to stay in the business.

Most often foreign guest complaints occur when the hotel services can not satisfy the guests. Misunderstandings and communication barriers occur when the hotel staff is not familiar with foreign guest's culture and does not speak the guest's language. This research was done to help hotel management explore the various cultural characteristics, identify the most frequent complaints of foreign guests, and discern the interpersonal and communication skills needed when interacting with culturally different guests.

In addition to the library research, most data on guest complaints was collected by telephone and personal interviews of hotel employees and travel agencies such as front desk clerks, bell personnel, waiters/waitresses, and travel tour guides.

The frequent complaints of foreign guests were listed to identify the various needs of several different ethnic groups. An analysis of the cultural characteristics of Japanese, Chinese, French, and German visitors was done and specific examples of cultural differentiae were noted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my parents for their support and encouragement during my six-year undergraduate and graduate study in the United States and making this degree possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Inbound tourism now represents an enormous and constant growth opportunity for the U.S. hotel industry. The foreign visitors coming to the United States increased from 33,859,000 in 1988 to 38 million in 1989. The largest sources of overseas visitors to the U.S. by country are Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Australia (Vladimir, 1988). The Japanese market has shown dynamic growth over the years, supplying about 3.2 million more visitors in 1990 than in 1960. Visitors from the United Kingdom grew 2.1 million; from Germany grew about 1.1 million; from France increased 0.7 million; and from Australia increased 0.4 million (Vladimir, 1988; Waters, 1991). For 1990, the U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration(USTTA) projected the total foreign visitor volume to the U.S. would rise to 41 million, a 12 percent increase, the same as in 1989 (The 1989-1990 Economic Review of Travel in America). Since the numbers of foreign visitors are increasing, the U.S. hotel industry will be facing a new service atmosphere - servicing culturally different guests.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To meet the needs of these large numbers of foreign visitors to U.S., hotel management should identify the cultural differences, develop appropriate training programs, and train the hotel staff to meet the needs and expectations of international guests. The primary reasons that cause guest complaints in the hotels include misunderstandings which occur when the hotel staff is not familiar with the culture and language of the guests, and service provided by the hotel which does not satisfy the guest's needs and wants.

Misunderstandings Caused by Lack of Familiarity with Guest's Culture

Every year more than one half of all international travelers spent part of their visits in hotels. Guests' satisfaction is the most important factor that determines repeated customers. Misunderstandings often occur if a hotel employee is not familiar with a guest's culture, or does not speak the guest's language. For example, a group of guests from Shanghai, China, had difficulty communicating with the hotel clerks, and misunderstandings occurred during their stay in the Raddison Inn, Rochester, New York in June, 1991. A host company in the U.S. had reserved hotel rooms for these foreign guests. It was the first time that these foreign guests had come to this country. None of the guests could speak English. After staying a few days in the hotel, these foreign guests wanted to check out of the hotel a few days

earlier than they had planned. Therefore, the guests wanted the hotel to refund the unused room rent by cash since the guests had prepaid the full room rent by cash in advance. However, based on the hotel policy, the refund would be paid by check either sent to the host company or mailed back to the guests' home address, Shanghai, China. In addition, the hotel did not have enough cash to refund the guests because the bank was closed on the weekend at that moment. Therefore the conflict and misunderstanding occurred because of the language barrier between both parties. Later the manager found one of the temporary employees who was from Hong Kong and could speak Chinese, and he asked the employee to interpret both parties' intention. Finally the foreign guests got their money and left happily (Shiao, 1992). Knowing the characteristics of different cultures will help hotel employees efficiently service multi-cultural guests. Although some hotels provide employee training programs, most of the programs focus on professional skills training.

Guest satisfaction does not necessarily tie to the employee's professional performance. After the guest has been supplied with the tangible products such as a clean, comfortable room, and properly prepared and served meals, he/she is still looking for an intangible element which is considered to be more difficult to deliver, such as service. Good service may include the immediate response to a guest complaint about the malfunctional air conditioning in his/her room, or a warm smile and friendly attitude of the waitress.

Hotels not only should provide employees with professional skills training but also need to develop a training program which enables the employees to produce and deliver the intended products and service in a way which will satisfy all of the customers. Learning extensively about the language, behaviors, and social background of specific cultural groups can ultimately lead to a clear understanding of how to service them.

Failure of Satisfying Guest's Needs and Wants

No business can grow and succeed without sufficient satisfaction of customer needs and wants. Guests have a varied mixture of needs, wants, desires, anticipations, and expectations. And they expect the hotel to be able to fulfill them; otherwise they may never return to the hotel. For instance, a guest made a reservation at an old country inn in the peak season. When the guest arrived at the hotel, he found the room he was given was not an airy and sunny room as promised. Of course the guest was furious at that moment and left the country inn; he will never return to the same inn under any circumstances. Another example is that international guests usually arrive hungry because of the time zone differences while the hotel does not provide the guests with round-the-clock room service.

In order to properly service culturally different guests, increase service quality, and compete with other hotels, a hotel needs to develop a multi-cultural training

program based upon the guest nationalities and the potential customers of the hotel to meet those international guests' needs and wants.

STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE

The main reason this topic was chosen is to inspire the hotelier that providing tangible products such as gourmet food, clean rooms, and recreation amenities are no longer the only attraction to compete with other hotels in the inbound guest market. Other than the tangible products provided by hotels is the very important product called service. Hotel service as perceived by customers is considered an intangible product which originates from the employee training program. This intangible product is so comprehensive that it may even include the smile of a receptionist, the way the wait persons talk, the words the staff choose, the body language of the staff, the remedy arrangement after a mistake has occurred, and the whole image of the hotel toward the guests.

Although most hotels provide employee training programs either for the beginners or for the current staff, most of the training programs focus on the professional skills rather than customer psychology.

The idea of this project is not only to explore the misunderstandings and incorrect behaviors which may occur when dealing with culturally different guests, but also to provide employees and managers with opportunities to acquire

the skills, knowledge, and values needed to meet change and beat the competitors.

CHATER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

STRONG GROWTH IN WORLD ECONOMY INCITES TOURISM

Strong economic growth in the world drives the tourism industry. According to the 24-nation Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development(OECD) (Waters, 1989), economic development in the industrialized world rose faster in 1988 than at any time since the early 1970s. In 1988 the economies of the industrialized nations increased 4% and were expected to increase by the same rate in 1989. Total world trade increased at a rate of 8.5% faster than expected, and the boom is considered the greatest growth in a four year period. This would indicate that both worldwide domestic and international travel will continue to expand at a buoyant rate.

International tourist arrivals have increased at an average annual growth rate of 4.3% since the oil crisis affected every region of the world in 1973 (Waters, 1989). From the statistics of international tourist arrivals from 1950 to 1990, the tourism industry seems nearly recession proof except for only two continual years (1982 and 1983) of no-growth since 1950; this coincides with a worldwide economic recession in 1982 (Table 1).

Table 1
World Tourism Growth, 1950-1990

Years	International tourist arrivals (thousands)	International tourist receipts' (million US\$)
1950	25,282	2,100
1960	69,296	6,867
1961	75,281	7,284
1962	81,329	8,029
1963	89,999	8,887
1964	104,506	10,073
1965	112,729	11,604
1966	119,797	13,340
1967	129,529	14,458
1968	130,899	14,990
1969	143,140	16,800
1970	159,690	17,900
1971	172,239	20,850
1972	181,851	24,621
1973	190,622	31,054
1974	197,117	33,822
1975	214,357	40,702
1976	220,719	44,436
1977	239,122	55,631
1978	257,366	68,837
1979	273,999	83,332
1980	284,841	102,363
1981	288,848	104,296
1982	286,780	98,616
1983	284,433	98,475
1984	312,426 (r)	109,812 (r)
1985	326,435 (r)	115,008 (r)
1986	333,993 (r)	138,683 (r)
1987	360,073 (r)	169,512 (r)
1988	392,015 (r)	194,166 (r)
1989	403,578 (p)	208,700 (P)
1990	416,000 (p)	230,000 (p)

' Excluding international fare receipts
(r) Revised figures
(p) Preliminary

Source: World Tourism Organization

Cited by Waters, 1991, p. 4.

THE TRENDS OF FOREIGN VISITORS IN U.S.

The composition of the inbound travel market to this country has dramatically changed during the past three decades (Vladimir, 1988). Foreign arrivals from Asia and the Middle East have increased more rapidly than other groups. The number of arrivals from Asia/Middle East increased from 1 million in 1975 to 2.4 million in 1985, and grew 21% from 1980 to 1985. Tourists from Asia/Middle East increased in the overseas market share from 9% in 1960 to 31% in 1985 while tourists from other areas of the world have either maintained or declined in the market share. The European share of total overseas visitors declined from 44% in 1960 to 39% in 1985. South America's share of the total overseas market dropped 7%, and Caribbean visitors also declined 11% from 1960 to 1985. Table 2 shows the changes in the inbound market to the U.S. from overseas countries from 1960 to 1985.

Table 2

CHANGES IN INBOUND TRAVEL FROM OVERSEAS COUNTRIES
1960 -1985

Overseas Area	1985 Arrivals	O/S Mkt. Share	1975 Arrivals	O/S Mkt. Share	1960 Arrivals	O/S Mkt. Share
	(000)	(%)	(000)	(%)	(000)	(%)
Europe	2,905	38.5	1,478	40.8	263	43.8
Asia/Middle east	2,363	31.4	1,002	27.6	52	8.7
South America	782	10.4	431	11.9	100	16.6
Central America	286	3.8	138	3.8	23	3.8
Caribbean	727	9.6	338	9.3	125	20.8
Oceania	342	4.5	185	5.1	31	5.2
Africa	131	1.7	53	1.5	7	1.2
Total Overseas	7,537	100.0	3,624	100.0	601	100.0

	1980- 1985		1975- 1985		1960- 1985	
	Volume Change	% Change	Volume Change	% Change	Volume Change	% Change
	(000)	(%)	(000)	(%)	(000)	(%)
Europe	-495	-15		+ 97	+2,642	+1,005
Asia/Middle east	+403	+21		+136	+2,311	+4,444
South America	-408	-34		+ 81	+ 682	+ 682
Central America	+ 16	+ 6	+ 148	+107	+ 263	+1,143
Caribbean	+137	+23	+ 389	+115	+ 602	+ 482
Oceania	+ 2	+ 1	+ 157	+ 85	+ 311	+1,003
Africa	34	-21	+ 78	+147	+ 124	+1,771
Total Overseas	-378	5	+3,913	+108	+6,936	+1,154

*Source: U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration.
Cited by Vladimir, 1988, p. 20.*

The largest sources of overseas visitors to the United States are Japan, the United Kingdom, West Germany, France, and Australia. The Japanese inbound market shows the most dynamic growth from 1975-1985 and supplies almost 1.5 million more visitors in 1985 than in 1960. The Japanese share of total overseas arrivals has also climbed up from 3 percent in 1960 to 20 percent in 1985, the largest market share (Vladimir, 1988) Table 3 shows the trends in arrivals from the top ten overseas market countries. Table 4 shows in 1984 the most often visited destinations by overseas countries are New York (New York City and Niagara Falls), California (Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and Yosemite National Park), Florida (Miami and Orlando/Disney World), Washington, D.C., and Hawaii.

Table 3

CHANGES IN INBOUND TRAVEL FROM THE TOP TEN
OVERSEAS COUNTRIES
1960 -1985

Overseas Country	1985 Arrivals	O/S Mkt. Share	1975 Arrivals	O/S Mkt. Share	1960 Arrivals	O/S Mkt. Share
	(000)	(%)	(000)	(%)	(000)	(%)
Japan	1,496	19.9	746	20.6	20	3.4
United Kingdom	861	11.4	438	12.1	94	15.7
West Germany	509	6.8	298	8.2	37	6.1
France	336	4.5	157	4.3	24	4.0
Australia	240	3.2	121	3.4	22	3.7
Bahamas	232	3.1	78	2.1	20	3.3
Italy	220	2.9	102	2.8	18	3.0
Brazil	190	2.5	102	2.8	11	1.8
Venezuela	162	2.1	105	2.9	40	6.7
Colombia	154	2.0	59	1.6	15	2.5
Other Overseas	3,137	41.6	1,419	39.1	299	49.8
Total Overseas	7,537	100.0	3,624	100.0	601	100.0

	1980- 1985		1975- 1985		1960- 1985	
	Volume Change	% Change	Volume Change	% Change	Volume Change	% Change
	(000)	(%)	(000)	(%)	(000)	(%)
Japan					+1,476	+7,274
United Kingdom	-269	-24			+ 766	+ 812
West Germany	-171	-25			+ 473	+1,291
France	+ 16	+ 5	+ 178	+113	+ 311	+1,288
Australia	+ 15	+ 6	+ 118	+ 98	+ 218	+ 989
Bahamas	n.a.	n.a.	+ 54	+199	+ 212	+1,055
Italy	+ 25	+13	+ 118	+115	+ 202	+1,112
Brazil	+ 34	+21	+ 90	+ 88	+ 181	+1,655
Venezuela	-303	-65	+ 57	+ 55	+ 121	+ 303
Colombia	n.a.	n.a.	+ 95	+161	+ 139	+ 917
Other Overseas	n.a.	n.a.	+1,718	+121	+2,838	+ 948
Total Overseas	-378	- 5	+3,913	+108	+6,936	+1,154

*Source: U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration.
Cited by Vladimir, 1988, p. 22.*

<p>Table 4</p> <p>U.S. DESTINATIONS VISITED BY OVERSEAS VISITORS IN 1984</p>		
U.S. Destination Visited	Estimated Visitors*	Share of Total Overseas Visitors
	(000)	(%)
New York	2,627	35
California	2,612	35
Florida	1,656	22
Washington, D.C.	888	12
Hawaii	836	11
Nevada	617	8
Illinois	580	8
Massachusetts	550	7
Texas	542	7
Arizona	444	6
Pennsylvania	391	5
New Jersey	376	5
Louisiana	309	4
Washington	263	4
Georgia	233	3
Total United States	7,528	100

Source: U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration.

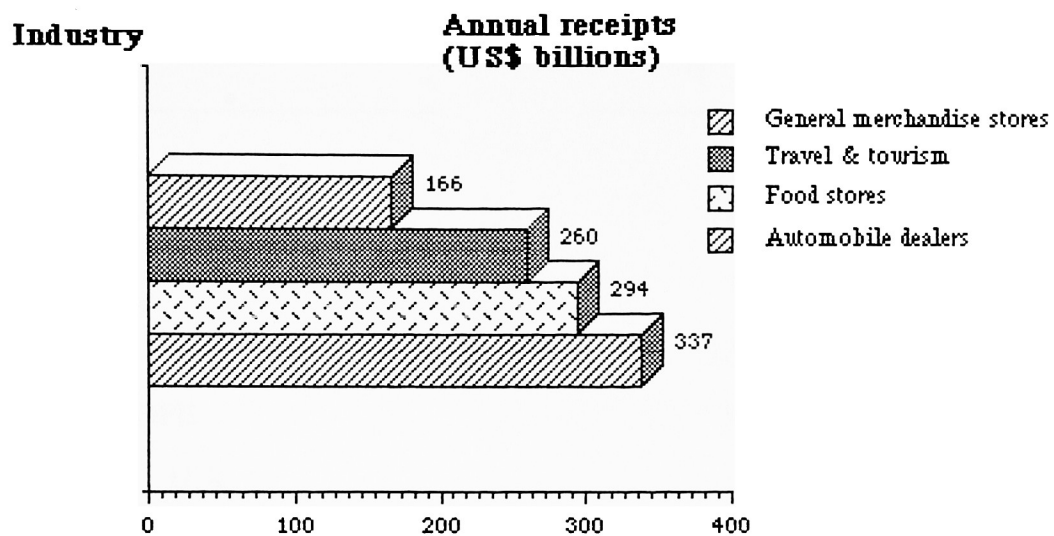
**Multiple visits (more than one destination could be visited on a single trip).*

Cited by Vladimir, 1988, p. 23.

Tourism is the world's fastest growing industry. Past economic history shows that business conditions improved for a while, then fell back into a recession phase, and have risen again after adjustments by the private sector or governments. Some economists agree that it is theoretically possible for a large diversified nation to continue to grow without periodic recessions. In recent years, the service sector in the U.S. has been able to grow fast enough to overcome the downturn in certain manufacturing or agricultural sectors. Tourism growth in the U.S. and in many other countries plays a major role in supporting overall economic growth even when other sectors are in recession. The travel and tourism industry ranked as the third largest U.S. retail industry (Figure 1) and generated more than 6% of the U.S. gross national product and \$37 billion in tax revenue, according to the statistics compiled by the U.S. Travel Data Center (Hotel and Restaurant Industry, 1989).

According to the statistics of the U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration (USTTA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce, 33,859,000 foreign visitors came to the United States in 1988, a 14% increase over 1987 (Miller, 1989). Table 5 shows a breakdown of foreign arrivals in 1988.

Figure 1
US Travel Boosts Economy



Source: US Travel Data Center

Graphic: American Society of Travel Agents

Cited in Hotels & Restaurants International, May 1989, P. 3.

Table 5
Foreign Arrivals in 1988

Origin	Number of Arrivals in 1988	% Increase 1988/1987
CANADA	13,843,000	+11%
MEXICO	7,505,000	+12%
OVERSEAS	12,511,000	+19%
EUROPE	5,772,000	+24%
U.K.	1,828,000	+34%
GERMANY	1,153,000	+21%
FRANCE	618,000	+14%
ASIA/MID. EAST	3,719,000	+19%
JAPAN	2,542,000	+19%
SOUTH AMERICA	1,013,000	+ 8%
CARIBBEAN	1,003,000	+10%
OCEANIA	517,000	+20%
CENTRAL AMERICA	350,000	+ 6%
AFRICA	137,000	+ 8%

Adapted from Miller, Sept. 1989, p. 36.

In 1989, the number of foreign visitors to the United States climbed up to a record high of 38 million, up 12 percent from the previous year (Waters, 1990). Table 6 shows the foreign visitor arrivals in U.S. from key markets in 1989. Japanese visitors went up 18% to 3 million, the U.K. increased 23% to 2.2 million, France increased 3% to 0.6 million, and the arrivals from Australia were up 23% to 0.4 million. Germany had a decline of 5% to a little over 1 million. Table 7 and Figure 2 both show the estimated foreign visitor arrivals and international travel receipts in 1989 and in 1990.

Table 6**Foreign Visitor Arrivals in U.S. From Key Markets - 1989**

Origin	1989 (000)	% Change 1989/1988	% Change 1989/1985
Japan	3,000	18%	101%
U.K.	2,245	23	160
Germany	1,095	-5	115
France	640	3	90
Australia	415	23	72
Italy	360	1	64
Sweden	285	19	154
Switzerland	270	-4	82
Netherlands	260	5	99

Source: U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration, Feb. 1990

Cited by Waters, 1990, p.69.

Table 7**Foreign Visitor Arrivals 1989 Estimates**

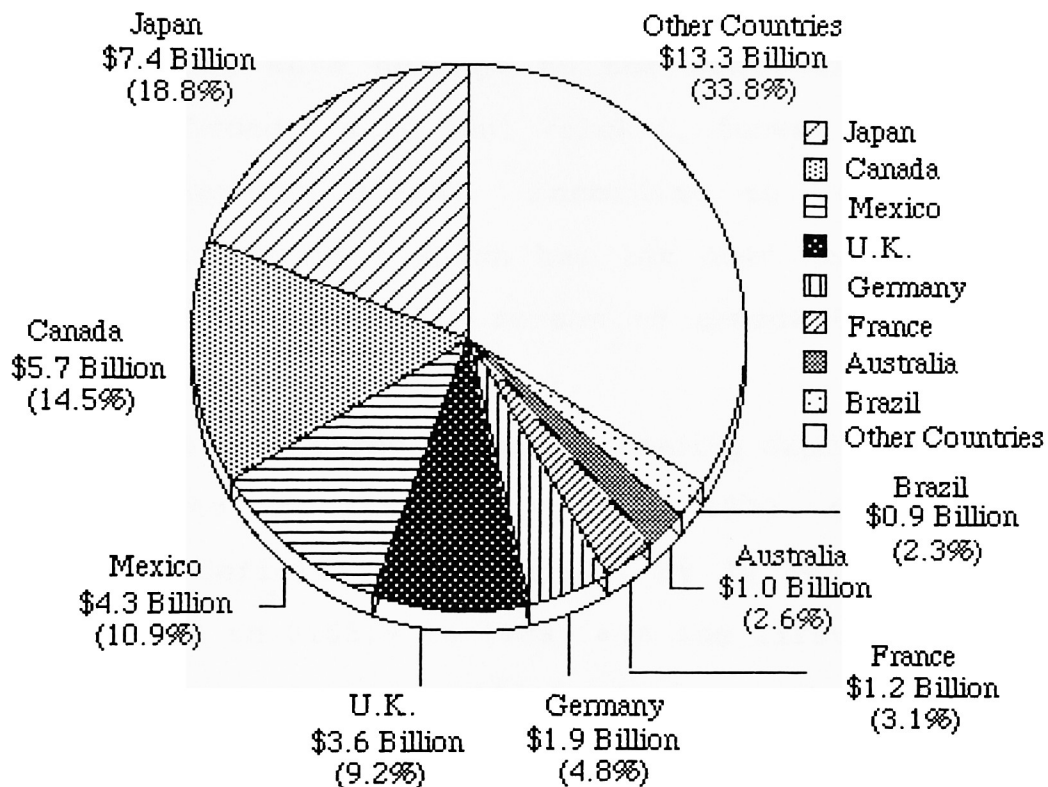
Origin	1989 (000)	% Change 1989/1988	% Change 1989/1985
Canada	15,175	10%	39%
Mexico	9,326	18	27
Overseas	13,755	10	83
Europe	6,280	9	121
Asia/Mid. East	4,095	16	100
So. America	1,135	12	45
Caribbean	1,115	11	54
Oceania	610	18	79
Central America	385	10	35
Africa	140	1	6
Total All Countries	38,255	12%	49%

Source: U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration, Feb. 1990

Cited by Waters, 1990, p. 69.

Figure 2

**Source of U.S. International
Travel Receipts 1990 Estimate**



Total \$39.3 billion
(excluding int'l fare
payments to U.S. carriers)

Source: U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration
Cited by Waters, 1991, P 60.

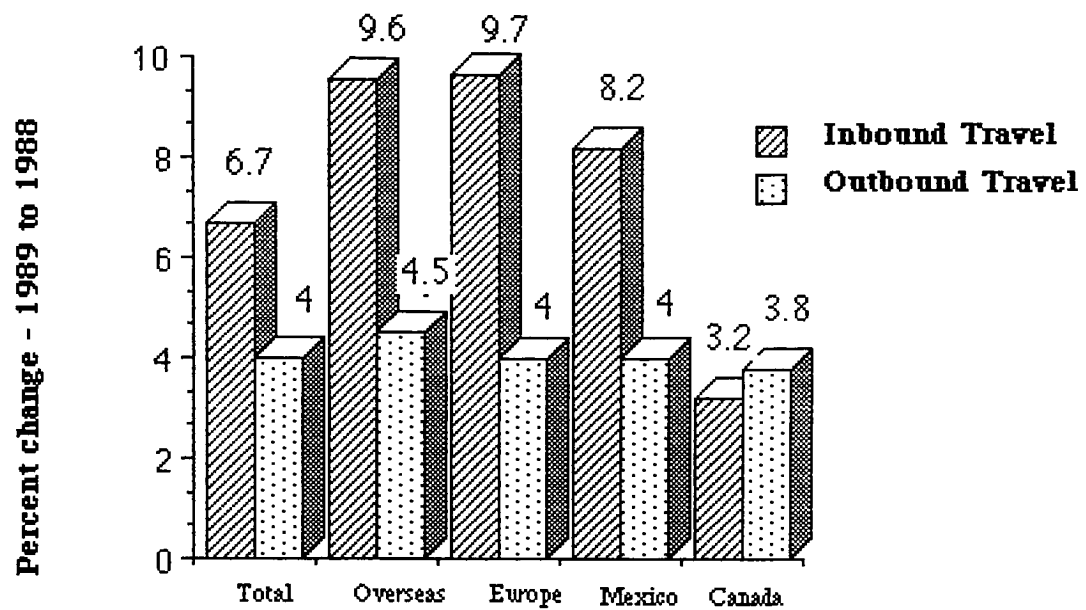
Reduction of Foreign Trade Deficit

U.S. tourism industry is playing an important role to help reduce America's foreign trade deficit. "America's soaring foreign trade deficit has put the United States in a difficult and dangerous situation. Our financial market becomes more and more hostage to the continuing flow of capital from abroad," said Paul Volcker, former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. According to Volcker, the tremendous trade deficit which has let down many American industries has been the main reason to impede the economic growth (Waters, 1990).

Tourism is considered America's leading export industry. During 1989 and the first quarter of 1990, the current account trade deficit shrank rapidly by 16.3% from \$126.5 billion in 1988 to \$105.9 in 1989. In the first quarter of 1990, the deficit shrank to \$22.9 billion. These incoming revenues were attributed to the foreigners spending for travel and tourism services, as reported on the financial pages of America's newspapers and magazines. No other industry has made such progress in its export performance (Waters, 1990). According to US Travel and Tourism Administration projections, foreign visitors to the USA during 1990 will continue to exceed the growth of Americans traveling abroad. This will result in lowering the US travel deficit to \$2.7 billion in 1990 (Hotels, March 1990). Figure 3 shows the diversity of US inbound travel and outbound travel in 1989.

Figure 3

Percent Change in Inbound/Outbound Travel



Source: American Society of Travel Agents Newsletter
Adapted from HOTELS, March 1990. P. 4.

Generation of More Job Opportunities

Foreign visitors to the U.S. not only increase foreign exchange earnings but also create many employment opportunities. In 1989 the total foreign arrival expenditures reached 34 million and generated 570 thousand jobs (U.S. Travel Data Center "Travel Printout", Aug., 1990). A research report (Friedmann, 1990) referring to the tourism boom has been done and indicates that travel and tourism is destined to be the number one employer in this country by the year 2000.

PREDICTION OF FUTURE VISITORS

U.S. economists predict that travel and tourism will become the largest industry in the world by the turn of the century, and will increase by 5% annually from 1,688 billion dollars in 1987 to 2,751 billion dollars in 1997 for the total world receipts from domestic and international tourism (Waters, 1989).

Factors related to the future growth of world tourism include:

(1) An increased standard of living in the world in recent decades which will stimulate the industry.

(2) the inherent desire to travel which exists in most humans. They want to see new sights, to meet other people, to engage in sports and other recreational activities, or just find a place to relax from the stress of work.

(3) the decrease in wars or political disturbances, or the relaxing of government controls of border crossing in some countries, which opens the world to increase travel. In the Far East, the government of Taiwan did not release the tourism exit permit until 1973 because of its political situation between Mainland China. Taiwanese people could not visit relatives in China until Taiwan and China relaxed some travel restrictions in 1988. South Korea removed all restrictions on foreign travel on January 1, 1989. Outbound trips increased to 65% in 1989 compared to 42% in 1988 (Waters, 1990). Another example is the union of West Germany and East Germany in 1990 which will also spur the future growth in tourism.

(4) The continued increase in the world's population of people receiving more income than is needed for food, clothing and shelter results in a growing market for tourism.

According to the United States Travel and Tourism Administration's 1989 Pleasure Travel Market Report to North America, the United States was the most popular vacation destination for French travelers in 1989. Twenty-eight percent of the nearly 6 million overseas French travelers took long vacation trips in the United States (The U.S. Travel Data Center "Data Center Insider" Jan., 1991).

Karl Fahr, chief of the U.S. Travel & Tourism Administration's Frankfurt office, predicts that there will be a record 1.2 million Germans to travel to the U.S. in 1991. The number of visitors from Britain will also top 1

million, a 25% increase over 1990, estimated by the London-based Thomas Cook travel agency (Fins, Magnusson, and Rothman, 1991).

Tourism in East Asia is growing at a faster pace than anywhere else in the world. South Korea and Taiwan are the two countries which have expanded outbound travels in recent years. At a meeting of U.S. travel executives in Washington in February 1990, Don Wynegar, USTTA research director, presented the expected fast-growing markets for visits to the U.S. in 1990 are South Korea, Taiwan, Sweden, Australia and Mexico (Waters, 1990).

THE TREND OF SERVICING FOREIGN GUESTS

As the numbers of travelers from abroad are increasing, hotels need to expand services and staff training to cater to foreign clientele. For instance, examining the increasing numbers of Japanese visitors, Toronto-based Four Seasons held a seminar on Japanese protocol for its staff in Fall 1990. To win and keep the Japanese market, the hotel provides Japanese visitors with maps in Japanese, accepts the Japanese credit card JCB, and has Japanese speaking employees on staff. In Great Britain, the British Tourist Authority (BTA) published "Britain Welcomes Japan," a 20-page brochure of advice on what to do and what not to do, to help hoteliers and restaurateurs to tap into the Japanese market. The BTA brochure reminds readers of subtle distinction in culture and decorum for Japanese visitors' needs and wants (Baum, 1991).

Although market conditions are the prime reason, the Tokyo-based Aoki Corp. plays a role in Westin's special Distinguished Guest Services Program. Some 28 of Westin's properties provide all information in Japanese, offer a Japanese breakfast and a Japanese language newspaper, and have Japanese-speaking employees on staff. Nine U.S. Westin properties have a telephone translation service for the guest. The Japanese market segment has increased at the Westin Maui to between 16% to 18% in 1990 since the program started from 6% to 8% in 1988 (Baum, 1991).

Hotels that provide ethnic breakfasts to make guests feel at home find they have loyal guests (Wexler, 1991). Park Hyatt Hotel, at the United Nations(UN) Plaza in New York City, provides two varieties of Japanese breakfasts. Chefs at the UN Plaza had weekly classes over a few months on preparation and presentation for Japanese cuisine. "We also have a Japanese-speaking staff and provide brochures and maps of the city in Japanese," says manager Michael Doyle who makes an effort to please the growing numbers of Japanese guests.

Although there are some conflicting viewpoints about Japanese breakfasts among the hoteliers, it is an amenity that must be provided to make the important Japanese guest feel comfortable in the morning (Wexler, 1991).

Another example of providing the special services for its ethnic guests is Pan American Motor Inn. Noticing the country of origin of many of their guests was Taiwan, Pan

American Motor Inn developed a brochure which has important information such as fire safety instructions and the names of nearby Chinese restaurants printed in Chinese in the brochure. "It might be the reason why there are quite a few Chinese who like to stay here because they feel like they were respected," said a frequent guest (Hsi-Yao Wang, 1991) of the Motor Inn.

SUCCESS WITH EVOLVING CULTURALLY-SENSITIVE SERVICE

In order to succeed with evolutionary changes, hotel staff and management need to be vigilant and sensitive to guests' complaints (Makens and Edgell, 1990). A Taiwanese group complained that Ramada Inn in Virginia had not yet learned to serve a "Chinese breakfast" although the hotel had several Chinese groups visit during the past few years, said a tour director (Chin-Huaw Chang, 1991) of New Golden Horse Tours Inc. in New York City. Chang (1991) also stated a serious complaint from a group from Hong Kong on a three-day trip to Boston in 1990 summer. Some members of the group had arguments with front desk clerks because the guests received a service charge for making room-to-room phone calls in the hotel. Most of the members of the group are frequent travelers, and they knew that they should not be charged with room-to-room phone calls unless there was a sign posted calling attention to this charge. "The hotel should change their policy if they want to build a good reputation. I can't change the hotel where the tour will be staying; it's

company's policy. The only thing I can do is that I will announce the telephone policy of the hotel before we check in." said Chang (1991).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The following methods were used to collect the data to support this research: 1) secondary sources in the library were identified; 2) phone interviews with employees of foreign travel agencies and hotels were conducted; 3) the ethnic characteristics needed when interacting with foreign guests based on the author's personal experiences and cultural background were summarized.

The ABI (Abstract Business Index) system was the source of the data of regarding the growth of world tourism, the growing rate of foreign visitors to U.S., future foreign arriving guests, and the potential foreign markets. A few tables and graphs were applied to create a better visual presentation for related data. Other information was also collected, such as how hotel services were improved by providing special features to meet the foreign guest's needs and wants in order to stay competitive in the industry.

A few guest complaints data were found in the secondary sources but not enough to support this research as expected. Therefore contacting the foreign travel agencies was the main method of gathering this data.

Telephone interviews of hotel employees such as front desk clerks, bell personnel, and waiters/waitresses were also

direct sources to identify what the foreign visitors' complaints and their needs and wants are. Since the front line employees have direct contact with guests, they are the immediate contact to whom the guests will complain.

Table 8 is the list of hotel service questionnaires used to discover the most frequent complaints occurring in the hotels.

Table 8

Hotel Service Questionnaires

1. Are there international guests in your hotel?
2. What's the percentage of the international guests in your hotel?
3. What are the major countries the international guests come from?
4. Does the hotel have multi-lingual instructions of using equipment in the guest rooms such as air conditioners, cable TVs, and computer operated refrigerators?
5. Does the hotel provide clear instructions and policy information for use of the telephone and facsimile machines in multi-lingual?
6. Does the hotel have multi-lingual signs, menus, or check-in form?
- 7 Does the hotel provide multi-lingual magazines, telephone book (yellow page), or newspapers?
8. Does the hotel offer local destination information in serveral languages? This includes information concerning hospitals, churches, attractions, and a street map.
9. Does the hotel provide foreign newspapers and magazines such as Nikkei, Japan's equivalent of The Wall Street Journal?

Table 8 (continued)

Hotel Service Questionnaires

10. Does the hotel accept any foreign credit cards?
11. Does the hotel have multilingual front desk personnel?
12. Does the hotel provide food service on a 24-hour basis?
13. Is there ethnic food served restaurant in the hotel?
Does it provide breakfast?
14. Does the room service and business center operate 24
hours a day?
15. Other suggestions or complaints to the hotel?
16. Does your hotel have training program for employees?
17. If yes, do they have subjects related to foreign customs
and protocol?

The ethnic characteristics including Japanese, Chinese, French, and German customs were summarized based on the author's work experiences and personal cultural background. Three years of work experiences for a travel agency and the Sheraton Hotel Taipei enabled the author to acknowledge the important role of cultural diversities while interacting with people from different countries in the world. Other personal background of the author for knowing more about the Asian cultures versus Western cultures originated from the different cultures in which the author grew up and was immersed, the people with whom he is acquainted, his six years of study in America, and his traveling experience in Asia and the U.S.

Information from all these sources was summarized and used to develop the recommendations for training employees in cultural diversities in the hotel industry. Eventually, knowing various cultural differences and interpersonal communication skills may help hotel employees to provide better service for their international guests. These recommendations are shown in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

THE RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

TYPICAL COMPLAINTS

Most complaints from international guests are focused on the printed materials, general services, and foods provided by the hotels. Since business persons from different countries more or less know English, few complaints come from them. On the other hand most tourists who only know a little or do not speak English at all, especially the tourists from Asian countries, have more difficulties in reading printed materials such as hotel signs, menus, street maps, and the operating instructions of equipment in the guest room. They have to depend more on their tour guide for assistance.

Some hotels provide multi-lingual magazines, foreign newspapers, and foreign magazines because of their steady amount of guests from certain countries. Although most hotels have multilingual front desk personnel, they may not have multilingual personnel available overnight. Most hotels do not accept foreign credit cards, causing possible inconvenience for the guest's payment.

One common complaint from oriental guests is that because the guests do not know how to tip the server

correctly, the server may not be as helpful and responsive to their needs.

International guests often arrive hungry due to time zone differences. Although most hotels provide room service, they are not on a 24-hour basis.

Table 9 lists the most frequent foreign guests' complaints in the hotels.

Table 9

Foreign Guests' Complaints In Hotels

1. Printed Materials

Hotels do not provide clear instructions and policy information for use of the telephone and facsimile machines in multi-lingual. (C & J)

Hotels do not have multi-lingual signs, menus, or check-in form. (C & J)

Hotels do not offer local destination information in several languages. This includes information concerning hospitals, churches, attractions, and a street map. (A)

Hotels do not have multi-lingual instructions of using equipment in the guest rooms such as air conditioners, cable TVs, and computer operated refrigerators. (C & J)

2. Services

Hotels do not provide foreign newspapers and magazines such as Nikkei, Japan's equivalent of The Wall Street Journal. (J)

Hotels don't provide multi-lingual magazines, telephone book (yellow page), or newspapers. (J)

Hotels have multilingual front personnel but may not be practical to implement overnight. (C & J)

A: All C: Chinese F: French G: German J: Japanese

Table 9 (continued)

Foreign Guests' Complaints In Hotels

Hotels do not accept foreign credit card. (C & J)

Flexible check-out times and waiting lounges are not available for departing guests. These lounges offer luggage storage, reading materials, and refreshments. (A)

No wake-up service is personally delivered if there is no response to phone calls. (C)

Guests received hotel employee's mistreatment because they did not tip the servers right. (C & J)

Currency exchange rate in the hotel is different than the official exchange rate. (C)

3. Foods

Hotels do not provide food service on a 24-hour basis. (A)

Hotels do not provide ethnic breakfasts such as Japanese breakfast and Chinese breakfast. (C & J)

A: All C: Chinese F: French G: German J: Japanese

By knowing different cultures and protocols, employees can create advantages for themselves and their hotels. Most misunderstandings and insufficient services result from the employee's unfamiliarity with the guests' cultures. Knowing ethnic characteristics may help employees to better understand the value differences of various cultures, minimize the misunderstandings, and provide better services to foreign guests. The following are the most common foreign customs which may be used as a reference for hotel employees to get acquainted with the foreign cultures. These foreign customs are categorized by five ethnic groups: Japanese, Chinese, French, German, and other (primarily Asian).

SPECIFIC ETHNIC CHARACTERISTICS: JAPANESE

Terms, Names, and Titles Addressing

Never address a Japanese by his first name. The first name is only used by his family and very close friends.

The Japanese have many synonyms to express "you", depending on the other person's sex, age, occupation, social, and professional status. For example, "arnada", "arna", "kimi", and "omar-ei" all express "you", but each word has different usage and should not be confused. "Arnada" is the most common word and can be used in any situation. "Arna" is only used when high-ranking person speaks to lower-ranking

person such as teacher to student. "Kimi" is an informal address among men and women. "Omar-ei" is only used by man to woman and between the persons who have very close relationship such as husband to wife.

Be extremely careful not to insult or shame anyone when using Japanese language. There are three basic levels of the Japanese language: the "low" level only used when addressing subordinates and younger people; the "intimate" level only used when talking with family members and close friends of the same age; the "high" level used when addressing superiors and respected elders, or when showing politeness to someone for any reason.

Greetings and Introductions Etiquette

The usual form of greeting is a long and low bow, not a handshake.

The typical Japanese is extremely polite in formal situations, highly sensitive in interpersonal relations and much concerned about how others perceive him. Traditionally, a Japanese delegation introduces its junior members first, and its senior members in ascending status order.

Dining Etiquette

At a Japanese meal, chopsticks should not be pointed at another guest when laid down on the bowl or chopstick rest.

It is customary to pick up a bowl of noodles and hold it under the chin or even right up to the mouth, and to slurp while eating them.

General Etiquette

Japanese are too polite to say "no" to other persons. It is customary for Japanese to avoid saying it at all. When refusing more food or a drink, they will more likely reply in a positive form "I'm fine" rather than "No, thanks." Therefore a vague "yes" does not really mean "yes". When speaking English, "yes" is used to express agreement, consent, affirmation, or confirmation. But it often confuses the person who is not a native English speaker. Misunderstanding occurs when a Japanese uses "yes" standing for "understand"; instead, the native English speaker interprets "yes" as "agree". For example, when a Japanese is asked "Are you interested in buying this car?", a response of "Yes" means "I understand what you said, I will consider that but not I'm interested in buying this car" while the Westerner will mean "I'm interested in buying this car."

In Japan, A "sah" sound from sucking breath through the teeth may indicate the person is upset or running out of patience.

In Japan, one does not unwrap the gift in the presence of the giver unless he/she is asked to do so. It is customary to place the gift at one's side, thank the giver, and bow. If one is asked to open a gift, he/she will read the card, and then delicately open the wrapping paper and reveal the gift to onlookers.

Attitudes toward punctuality vary greatly from one culture to another. Like Germans, the Japanese are very punctual. The Japanese consider it rude to be late for a business meeting, but it is acceptable to be late for a social occasion.

Taboos

As for the Chinese, white flowers in Japan are associated with death. A potted plant given to a Japanese person in a hospital implies that the patient is "rooted in illness."

The number "4" is considered unlucky for the Japanese since "4" is pronounced as "shi" in Japanese and its pronunciation is very closed to the word "shinu", the verb to die.

It is extremely important to avoid World War II as a topic of conversation.

SPECIFIC ETHNIC CHARACTERISTICS: CHINESE

Terms, Names, And Titles Addressing

Chinese family and given names are usually confusing to the Westerners. It is customary to address Chinese by their last name with the title Mr., Mrs., or Miss until you are close enough to know the nickname they prefer to be called. Generally speaking Chinese address each other by the family name followed by an appropriate title, or by family name followed by the full given name together. It is awkward to address a Chinese guest by calling his/her first name.

The surnames of Chinese husbands and wives often do not match because most Chinese women keep their family name when they marry. Children take their father's surname.

Greetings and Introductions

When introducing people in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, higher-ranking persons are introduced before those of lower rank, an older person comes before a younger, and women precede men.

Physical contact such as back-slapping or hugging as well as gestures of affection such as kissing on cheeks will not be understood by the Chinese and may cause embarrassment.

Communication Etiquette

Depending on the circumstance, the Chinese scrupulously use direct, indirect, or no eye contact. When they talk to an equal peer or the same ranking member, direct eye contact is essential. When an authority reprimands a subordinate, the underling avoids any eye contact by lowering the eyes to indicate "regret." To avoid rude "staring", a subordinate always uses indirect eye contact when the superior speaks to him/her.

Dining Etiquette

The Chinese started eating with chopsticks about 4,000 years ago. When eating with Chinese people, never point the chopsticks at another person and never stick them upright in a bowl of rice. Because the chopstick is a sign of heaven, one chopstick stuck in a bowl of rice is used at a typical funeral meal. If one leaves one's chopsticks upright in a bowl of rice, it symbolizes death. Dropping chopsticks connotes a bad luck.

In Chinese custom, to tap on a glass, plate or teacup to get a waiter's attention in the restaurant is considered a incredibly bad manners.

It is customary to have ten to fifteen courses in a typical Chinese meal for special guests or an occasion such as a birthday, wedding, and the celebration of a new born baby. Usually a fish dish, soup, and some dessert (often simply fresh fruit) imply the end of the meal. A sweet dish, which most Westerners think it signals the end of the meal, is often served about the midway in the meal.

It is polite to sample every dish during a meal and it is customary to hold the bowl close to mouth when eating rice.

Hot towels are usually distributed at the end of the meal with the final course so that people can wipe their face and hands. It is polite to leave about ten minutes after the last cup of tea has been served and before the towels are passed.

Seating arrangement is very important at meetings with Chinese. In a formal dinner, the host and the chief guest sit on opposite sides of the table facing each other. The seat facing the door is considered as the "head" seat of the room, therefore the host seat is closest to the door. As to other guests' seating order, they are seated to the both

sides of the chief guest in descending order of their rank or importance. In other words, the persons who are seated to the immediate right and left of the host are the lowest ranking members in the party. On the contrary the Westerner might consider the guests sitting nearest the host are the chief guests.

Tipping

Like the Japanese, Chinese do not tip even if excellent service was provided. In most Asian countries people do not tip because tipping is not an established custom even though it is on the increase.

General Etiquette

The Chinese usually wave a hand in front of their face in a quick, fan-like motion to show a negative response or anger.

In Chinese tradition, they do not think young people are mature or trustworthy enough for authoritative positions. A leader should be calm. The fast-talking, action-oriented behaviour widely admired in the United States signals immaturity. The Chinese often think assertiveness is extremely aggressive and rude.

To Chinese, holding hands by two people of the same sex is acceptable and not considered homosexual.

In American-style meetings, everyone speaks out, and all different opinions were hashed out during meetings; while to Chinese, the leader of the group plays the role as a spokesperson for the whole group during the meeting. All the differences of opinion the group may have are resolved beforehand or afterward.

The Chinese consider anyone as an "outsider" if the person is not a member of their family, their work unit, or their circle of friends. In other words, the Chinese have no obligation and are not expected to have any concern for them since they have no relationship with outsiders. This characteristic can be related to the noise in the populated areas of China. The Chinese tend to be noisy people when they are in crowds. Two reasons may be explained to the formation of the characteristic. One is that it is necessary to emphasize the different tones because of the various Chinese languages. Another reason is that they have to speak up in order to be heard when other people are talking loudly. The Cantonese are considered especially loud people, appearing as if they are having verbal combat when they are speaking due to the nine tones in the Cantonese language.

Taboos

In Chinese custom giving straw sandals to others connotes a bad omen because they are worn at funerals. Likewise receiving a gift of a clock would be considered as a bad omen since it is thought to be a prediction of the time of the person's eventual death. Because the Chinese words for "giving a clock" sound similar to "watching someone dying," and the gift could be considered a curse.

Giving someone an umbrella as a gift also stands for a bad luck because the word for "umbrella" sounds close to the word for "separation" and "isolation."

Like the Japanese, the Chinese do not give "4" of anything because the word for "4" (*Shi*) is a homonym for death. It is customary that most hotels and hospitals have no floors and no rooms numbered "4". Therefore hotel rooms with number "4" and "44" should not be assigned to Japanese and Chinese guests.

In Chinese custom some colours, numbers, and symbols are reserved for certain functions. Improper using may cause a very serious misunderstanding. For instance, one should not wear white colours or give white flowers as a gift because white is for funerals. A man with a green hat advertises that his wife has a love affair with another man.

It is also considered bad luck to give a newly, married couple a gift of money with an odd number of tens such as "\$210", "\$430", and "\$570". Instead, "\$200", "\$660", and "\$860" are more appropriate.

When talking with people from China, one should refer to the country as the "People's Republic of China" or simply "China" rather than "Mainland China."

Avoid mentioning Taiwan, and do not criticize Chinese leadership when conversing with people from China. Likewise, when talking with people from Taiwan, avoid discussing Mainland China and local politics.

SPECIFIC ETHNIC CHARACTERISTICS: FRENCH

Greetings Etiquette

Handshaking and kissing both cheeks are the common form of greeting, but the latter is for family members and more familiar friends. A visitor should not offer his hand to a person of superior authority.

Dining Etiquette

In a formal dinner, usually the most important guest or

host signals the beginning of the meal. Meal times are usually long and leisurely.

In the French custom coffee and dessert are served only after the meal; wine or mineral water are served during the meal, and ice water with the meal is only for heathens.

The French foods range from songbirds to snails. It is said that the French eat anything that moves. Cole Porter, a song writer, said that "Americans keep horses as pets, the British ride them, but the French eat them."

Tipping

It is customary for French guests to leave small change with the payment, and they tip more if a better service was provided. Often the French tip washroom attendants, hairdressers, beauticians, cinema ushers, taxi drivers and porters.

Things to avoid

It is considered impolite to start a conversation in French and then revert to English during a business dealing.

Avoid personal questions, politics, and money as topics of conversation.

To French-speaking people, chrysanthemums are associated with mourning. Like Germans, red roses are a gift only between lovers.

Many French people are offended by dinner guests who begin a meal with palate-numbing drinks such as martinis and Scotch.

SPECIFIC ETHNIC CHARACTERISTICS: GERMAN

Terms, Names, and Titles Addressing

Germans use full surnames on both business and social occasions even if they know each other fairly well. First names are seldom used when doing business and using the surname preceded by the title is considered more polite. In German professional rank often rates as a title. Titles such as "Herr Director" are sometimes used to indicate prestige, status, and rank. And it is considered deeply offensive if the title is not added on someone who has a title.

In German "Sie" and "Du" both mean "you". The latter form is intimate. When addressing one person whom you are not intimate with, use the formal form "Sie". The difference may not be evident when dealing in English, but it is very much in the mind of the German interlocutors.

Greetings Etiquette

Germans always shake hands when greeting each other. It is customary for women to prepare a hand to be raised to the lips and kissed.

Tipping

It is customary for Germans to tip taxi drivers, hairdressers and cloakroom attendants.

Things to Avoid

Avoid references to basketball, baseball, or American football. Talk about the German countryside, hobbies, and sports such as soccer instead.

MISCELLANEOUS CHARACTERISTICS

In most Asian cultures a smile may be used to disguise embarrassment while the Westerner interprets a smile as a response to continue the topic; instead, a smile on an Asian means the topic should be dropped.

In most Oriental cultures, people bow to each other when greeting. Physical contact such as hugging, kissing, particularly mouth-to-mouth kissing, is considered as a

sexual act and should be avoided. In some cultures even handshaking is avoided. For instances, Thais do not usually shake hands, instead, they greet each other with the traditional and most common Thai greeting - wai, which is made by placing both hands together in a prayer position at the chest and bowing slightly; in South Korea men greet each other by bowing and shaking hands with both hands or with the right hand, but women usually do not shake hands; the handshake is a common form of greeting among men, but a slight bow or nod would be more appropriate between men and Malaysian women, especially women of the older generation.

Unlike Westerners, direct eye contact in Asia carries a subconscious connotation of provocation and condemnation. Westerners are taught to look at people to whom they are speaking. 'Eye-to-eye' implies mutual understanding and trust. A person who does not keep eye contact is suspected of being dishonest or inattentive. When Asians do not have eye contact while conversing, Westerners may feel that somehow they are not being listened to or that the Asians are not interested in what they are saying. The characteristics may stem from the custom that Asian parents discipline their children with a hard stare.

Asians make less use of their arms and hands to emphasize speech than Westerners do. In the West, the hands-on-hips gesture indicates frankness and confidence, while

among Asians the gesture reflects obstinacy and may be insulting.

People around the world use body movements or gestures to convey specific messages. Although countries sometimes use the same gesture, they often have very different meanings. For example, the "OK" sign commonly used in the United States is a good example of a gesture that has several different meanings according to the country. In France, it means zero; in Japan, it is a symbol for money; and in Brazil it carries a vulgar connotation.

Asian are superstitious about gifts. Most of the taboo gifts carrying negative symbolism are homonyms of morbid words or items associated with the funeral ceremony. For example, knives, scissors, and letter openers are the symbol of terminating relationship between two parties.

In Japan the combination of red and white is widely regarded as appropriate for happy and pleasant occasions, but it is not suitable to wrap gifts in red color. In France red is regarded as more masculine than blue.

In Europe, it is considered bad luck to present thirteen or any even number of flowers.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Purpose

The increasing numbers of foreign visitors in the U.S. incites the hotel industry to be more competitive. The hotels where the foreign visitors are most likely to stay during their visit period need to provide sufficient services to meet the foreign guest's needs and wants in order to maintain business, gain repeated customers, and compete with others. Although most hotels surveyed provided training programs for the employees, most of the training programs focus on the professional skills training. However, foreign guest satisfaction is not necessarily tied to the equipment and services provided by the hotels. The purpose of this study is to address the misunderstandings and communication barriers that might occur while dealing with foreign guests. The hotel training program designer should be more attentive to appropriate ethnic characteristics in order to train their employees to service culturally different guests correctly.

Hotel employees may properly service international visitors because of their familiarity of guests' cultures developed through the employee training program provided by the hotel. A proper training program may help employees to

minimize the misunderstandings and improper services when interacting with international guests. Eventually a good training program may increase the hotel's image and allow them stay more competitive in the hotel industry.

Limitations

The main limitation in this study was the data collected by informal samplings. The collected data of guest complaints was random and not on a demographic basis. Since the survey questionnaires were conducted by phone interviews instead of mailing them, more difficulties were found in analyzing and summarizing the output of the surveys. The samplings of the surveyed hotels did not include the same type of hotels in the same city. The random samplings used might show the inaccurate data output because of the diverse types of hotels which were surveyed. Furthermore, no statistical analysis of the phone interview questionnaires was attempted. Instead this project serves as an exploration of the extent of the problem of serving foreign guests inadequately.

Methods of Research

The secondary sources in the library plus phone and personal interviews were the major methods to be used during the research. The work experiences and cultural background of the author also helped describe the characteristics of various cultures. Although the Japanese, Taiwanese, German,

and French consulates were contacted, most data they provided were not related to the topic of this study.

Summary of Major Findings

The major findings in this study include the frequent guests' complaints and the special expectations and etiquette appropriate for guests from Japan, China, France, and Germany. The foreign guests' complaints listed in Table 9 (page 36) indicate the various needs of different groups of people. The special ethnic characteristics of these four nationalities, Japanese, Chinese, French, and German, were described in chapter 4.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The hotel business is a "people-to-people" business with transactions occurring on a one-to-one basis. No matter how important new technology may be in the operation, the quality of personal service will still be the main focus in the hotel for the future (Hotels, March 1991). Besides the amenities provided by the hotels, the other very important commodity perceived by the guests is service. "Service is the highest form of human endeavor - to willingly serve another human being," said William P. Hart, the president and chief executive officer of Hart Hotel Management Corp. (Troy, 1991). Good service originates from employee training

programs provided by the hotel. The well-trained and motivated employee, of course, is more inclined to serve guests. Hotel employees meet much more challenge in servicing international guests rather than clientele of their own culture. Therefore, a well-designed employee training program is a necessary strategy to provide good service to the culturally different guests from all over the world.

The Results of Training

Improve service quality - With the growth of the tourism industry, foreign guest arrivals to U.S. have increased at a healthy rate. The service requirements and expectations of these international guests are different from those of domestic guests. In order to properly service culturally different guests, a hotel should provide employees with multi-cultural training programs. Hotel employees trained to be sensitive to multi-cultural differences will know the guest's customs and habits better, and will service them more properly. This will also minimize the possibility of misunderstanding and communication barriers between guests and the hotel. Similarly, cultural shock to hotel employees will also be avoided as the hotel employees can efficiently service foreign guests properly and take pride in doing their job well.

Improve the image of the hotel - Another benefit for the hotel is that foreign travel agencies will be more interested

in the hotels when making a reservation if the hotel employees know the guest's culture well and can speak the guest's language. Foreign visitors will also feel more comfortable if they can communicate with hotel employees in the visitor's language. Since culturally-trained hotel employees are familiar with foreign guest's culture and/or speak the guest's language, they can then provide the services to meet the guest's needs and wants. Eventually, guests will be satisfied with hotel's services and will repeat the patronage. If customers have a bad service experience, it will be remembered and transferred by association to other properties of the same flag. Likewise if an especially good service experience occurs, it likely will be associated with the entire hotel chain, not just one branch.

The costs of training - From the organization's point of view, training can provide benefits in improving employee performance through increasing their knowledge of multiple cultures, improving communication skills, and clarifying their work role. However, training involves cost to the organization. Management must spend time and effort on planning and implementing training strategies for all members of staff. A financial commitment to the training materials will include:

- When the training will take place.
- How long the training will be.

- Where the training will be held.
- Whom the training will involve.

The following key subjects are suggested to be addressed when designing an employee training program while dealing with culturally different guests in the hotel industry. (A suggested training course for new employees is also listed in Appendix A.)

Introduction of the Need of Training

The goal of multi-cultural training is to improve the employee's knowledge of how human beings everywhere can be satisfied with the hotels in which they stay. Hotels are places where people from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds meet. They are places where guests have to cope with unfamiliar customs, surroundings and perhaps an unfamiliar language. These guests are subject to considerable stress and anxiety as they attempt to make sense of the new environment around them. Knowing the range of cultural variance permits the employee to know the guest's customs and habits better, and consequently, to provide them with better services. The ultimate objective of recognizing multi-cultural differences is not only to understand non-Western peoples but also Western peoples.

Intensification of Foreign Languages

Language barriers often create a problem when hotel employees assist/service non-English speaking guests.

Although some hotel chains have their registration forms and guest service directory printed in several languages, it is a definite advantage for hotel employees to have a basic knowledge of everyday phrases in a number of foreign languages. A greeting or exchange of a few phrases in the guest's own language will certainly help to put the guest at ease, and the employees may be able to help the guest to better understand the basic layout and policies of the hotel.

Characteristics of Foreign Guests

Knowing the different social customs and habits can minimize the guest's hostilities and dissatisfaction. Most guest complaints not only result from the dissatisfaction of the hotel service but also originate from an offense to the guest's customs and habits.

To avoid cultural shock for hotel employees when servicing culturally different guests, a hotel should provide employees with information and training on different cultural expectations, customs, and personal habits. The following examples indicate some cultural sensitivities. A convention room set up for a Chinese meeting or a banquet set up for Chinese guests in the dining room should not have white candles or white chrysanthemums on the tables because white candles and white chrysanthemums are used at funerals in Chinese customs.

In Japanese etiquette, waitpersons should not be friendly to the guests but should be respectful to them;

therefore, making a joke to the guests is thought to be very impolite. Tipping is not customary. It is commonplace that Japanese do not tip despite the excellent service, unlike the custom in this country where people need to tip almost anyone who services them. Another critical issue in servicing Japanese guests is that the waitstaff should use the highest level of language to communicate with the guests due to the various language levels in Japanese language (Yoshimura, 1990).

Koreans should never be given a red pen for signing or writing anything because red pens are used only in special events.

The French only tip the waitpersons when they are satisfied with the service. It is very impolite to call a French guest by his/her first name even though the hotel employees are acquainted with the guest. It should also be noted that there are two different kinds of "you" form when speaking French. Both "Vous" and "Tu" mean "you" in French. Hotel employees should use the "Vous" form instead of using the "Tu" form since the "Tu" form is an informal usage, and is only used to call a friend. Also, it is more polite to shake hands with guests than just to say greeting words when greeting French guests (Ilbey, 1991).

Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Choose the right words - In order to avoid guest dissatisfaction caused by misunderstandings, hotel employees

should be able to understand the cultural background, questions, and concerns of foreign guests.

The front desk, usually considered as the gate of hotel, gives guests the first impression of the hotel. The first persons to have contact with the guest are likely to be the front desk clerks who act as the representatives of the entire hotel because a guest may stop many times at the hotel without contacting the manager. The initial impression created by the front desk clerks greatly influences guest perceptions of the entire operation. A guest who is impressed at the front desk might carry that impression to the next encounter with any hotel employee: it could be a bellperson, a telephone operator, a room service waiter, or a bartender. A guest receiving indifferent and poor service at the front desk, however, will be on guard when dealing with other employees and may transfer resentment from one encounter to the next. Therefore, some characteristics are especially required for those who work as a front desk person in the hotel. Words chosen by a front desk clerk are critical when communicating with international guests, especially for those guests whose native language is not English. Improper use of vocabulary will confuse guests and cause misunderstanding. For example, the word "lounge" can confuse international visitors because it is used here for bar, lobby and also toilet. Usually, a vocabulary of reasonable extent will be one of the clerk's most effective

tools to enhance the guest's understanding during conversations.

Avoid using slang - Another communication skill to assist international guest understanding is the use of simple, concise words, and the avoidance of using slang during the conversations. Since most non-native English speakers can only understand simple and basic vocabularies; therefore, hotel employees should avoid using difficult words when communicate with the foreign guests. Hotel staff should also be aware of that even the simple words may cause the guests' confusion. For example, if a clerk greets a Japanese guest with "What's up", the guest might be entirely confused by what the clerk has said. In the meantime the guest might look upward. Consequently, the guest might be embarrassed after he found out what "What's up" means. So often this greeting phrase is used in the daily life in this country, but it will confuse the guests who have just arrived. Since every clerk necessarily speaks to the public, it is essential that the hotel provide training in public speaking for the front desk clerks.

Respond to guests properly - An appropriate attitude during the conversation not only may show the server's understanding but also show the respect to the guests.

1. Paraphrase the guest's words. Paraphrasing is used to transfer the other person's idea into your own words and to show what you think the person is talking about (Renner,

1989). A good paraphrase should be able to capture the full content rather than catch the general meaning of the guest's message. For example:

Guest: "Can you help me to find a Mr. Pearson? I am expecting to meet him in the lobby."

Clerk: "Of course, sir. What's his room number?"

This paraphrase does not catch the full content of the guest's message. It only catches the general meaning and makes the clerk ask further information so that he/she can fully understand the situation. An appropriate example should be the following:

Clerk: You expect to meet Mr. Pearson. Is he staying in the hotel?

This paraphrase captures the essence of the inquiry and then moves the communication to the problem-solving phase because Mr. Pearson could be anyone of the following: a registered room guest, a no-show guest, a guest in the dining room, or a staff member of the hotel.

Paraphrasing is extra work and front desk clerks may at first feel awkward using it when communicating with foreign guests. By paraphrasing, a clerk shows his/her understanding to a guest and enables the guest to clarify any misunderstanding that he/she has caused. Martin & Lundberg (1991) also mentioned that information may need to be repeated several times or in a slightly different manner when communicating with elderly people, foreigners, and preoccupied people. Since the front line people are

frequently asked for information, it would be to their advantage to make sure the message they receive is really what the guest meant before agreeing, disagreeing or answering.

2. Proper use of guests' names. Calling people by their name is another tradition in the hotel industry (Haszonics, 1971). "A man's name is to him the sweetest and most important sound in the English language," said Dale Carnegie in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. As Haszonics (1971) mentioned, many times the hotel clerks discern that it is more tactful not to call the guest "Mr. Jones," at the front desk. For culturally different guests, calling a guest by his/her first name is considered very impolite conduct. As mentioned earlier, calling a French guest's first name is very impolite even though the hotel clerk is acquainted with the guest. Likewise, calling a Japanese guest's first name is thought to be impolite to the guest (Takahashi, 1991), and calling a Chinese guest's first name is also awkward to the guest.

Avoid being hostile - Most often guests' anger and complaints occurred when the guests perceive the poor communication and interpersonal skills during the personal interactions. Hotel employees should be trained to be aware of the proper communication and interpersonal skills to avoid the guest's discontent.

1. Avoid arguments with guests. Avoiding sensitive, controversial questions, and arguments during conversations is another issue that a clerk should note (Heldenbrand, 1973). Front desk clerks should avoid being drawn into discussions of sensitive, controversial questions relating to politics, religion, race, and the like. For instance, a clerk who is asked "What do you think of the Chinese government's action to suppress the student riots in the Tian-An-Men Square?" should not answer the question directly to the guest, especially when the clerk does not know which side of the event the guest is on. The best way to avoid this sensitive question is to distract the guest's attention to another topic.

2. Avoid guests' irritation. A front desk clerk should also be oblivious to guests' mistakes to avoid their irritation (Helderbrand, 1973). A clerk should always remember never to call attention to a guest's mistake or shortcoming. Doing so seldom makes the guest happy. For instance, after having asked for his room key, a guest returns with the key and indicates that he was given the wrong one. Whether the guest asked for the wrong key or was given the wrong key is not important. The important issue here is how the clerk can avoid the guest's irritation even if it is the guest's mistake asking for the wrong key. This often happens with those guests who have a strong accent when speaking English as their second language. A tactful "Sorry, sir" and immediate exchange of the keys should make the guest

happy and dispel the irritation he had when he assumed that the clerk gave him the wrong key. To avoid a guest's irritation caused by his misunderstanding, another tactful approach may be given by the clerk such as "I don't believe I made myself clear." instead of "You misunderstood me." The first phrase relieves the guest from any part in the misunderstanding, while the second implies the guest perception was at fault.

3. Avoid rebuking the guests. Avoidance of indirectly rebuking guests should also be noted during a conversation (Heldenbrand, 1973). For instance, a guest might walk to the front desk and hand the clerk a letter to be mailed without knowing the mail-box is nearby. To ask the guest to drop it in the box, or call a boy to do it might appear as a criticism of the guest's request. Very often this situation happens to the international guests who don't know English. To avoid such occurrence the clerk should wait until the guest has left before disposing of the letter.

4. Listen objectively. One mark of attention and concern for the guests is for the hotel employee to listen attentively and to react in some way (Martin & Lundberg, 1991). The hotel employees must be objective and listen to whatever the guest is saying. A guest who is upset about hotel service may quickly cause a defensive attitude in the employee. Those guests who don't speak fluent English, usually complain with half of English and half of their

native language. This causes more difficulties for the hotel employees to realize the facts. The rule of thumb is for the employee to remain objective and show a genuine concern while listening to the whole message the guest is sending, or to find a translator if necessary. Paraphrasing is especially useful in this situation as the listener attempts to filter through the story and the guest's emotions to get the facts.

5. Social and psychological distance. The needs for social distance vary greatly not only from one person to another in the same cultural background but also from cultural differentiae (Martin & Lundberg, 1991). "How close" should a service person be to the guest? The hotel staff need to discern the differences among their guests. For instance, Latin Americans and Middle Easterners often feel most comfortable when they are physically close to people whom they speak to, while British and Eastern North Americans feel uneasy if approached too closely.

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APPENDIX A

A SUGGESTED TRAINING COURSE FOR NEW EMPLOYEES

Unit I

ORIENTATION

Training Time

Class, 2 hours

Objectives

To familiarize trainees with the characteristics of hotel

To inform trainees of the competition of hotel business

To inform trainees of the goals of the hotel

To familiarize trainees with their responsibilities

Unit Outline

A. Categories of hotels

1. Commercial hotels
2. Airport hotels
3. Suite hotels
4. Casino hotels
5. Residential hotels
6. Resorts

B. Analysis of the characteristics of the hotel in the vicinities

1. Types of service
2. Guests varieties
3. Competitions

C. Guest's satisfaction

1. Tangible
2. Intangible

D. Work performance

1. Duties
2. Relationship among employees

Unit II

INTRODUCTION TO VARIOUS CULTURES

Training Time

Class, 4 hours

Objectives

To familiarize trainees with various cultures

To inform trainees of the characteristics of different peoples

To inform trainees of culture shock

Unit Outline

A. Introduction of guests cultures

1. Social background

- 2. Human behaviors
- B. Characteristics of guests
 - 1. Customs
 - 2. Taboos
 - 3. Favors
 - 4. Body language
- C. Culture shock
 - 1. Comparison of cultural differentiae
 - 2. Methods to avoid culture shock

Unit III

BASICS OF ENGLISH COMMUNICATION

Training Time

Class, 4 hours

Objective

To help trainees to speak properly and write clearly

To familiarize trainees with the skills when helping illiterate guests

Unit Outline

- A. Review of grammar
- B. Vocabulary (avoid slangs)
- C. Spelling
- D. Handwriting (neatness)

E. Fundamentals of Speech

1. Volume of tone
2. Speed of speech
3. Diction

F. Proper attitude when helping illiterate guests

1. Avoid embarrassing guests
2. Attend to guest's words
3. Have eye contact during the conversation

Trainee Activities

Have trainees role-play various situations which may come up in the work.

Unit IV

FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

Training Time

Class, 4 hours

Objectives

To have trainees know basic grammar of the language they learn

To have trainees learn basic conversation

To familiarize trainees with the right diction in conversation

To emphasize the words which should not be used in conversation

Unit Outline

A. Basic grammar study

B. Greeting

C. Words chosen

1. Polite form

a. To male

b. To female

2. Slangs

D. Words avoid to be used